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## **Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2002**

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## Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2002

### Summary

The Al Qaeda terrorist network founded by Osama bin Laden is believed to pose a continuing, although diminished, threat to the United States at home and to U.S. interests and allies abroad following the network's defeat in its base in Afghanistan. As stated in taped appearances by its leaders since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the goal of Al Qaeda is to destroy high profile U.S. targets in order to end what Al Qaeda claims is U.S. suppression of Islamic societies. In these appearances, bin Laden virtually claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks. Throughout its history, Al Qaeda has sought to oust pro-U.S. regimes in the Middle East and gain removal of U.S. troops from the region.

Before September 11, signs pointed to a decline in state sponsorship of terrorism. Since the attacks, some countries that are designated by the United States as state sponsors of terrorism, including Iran and Sudan, have cooperated to an extent with the U.S.-led war against Al Qaeda and its Taliban protectors in Afghanistan. In spite of its cooperation against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Iran is still considered a major sponsor of radical Islamic groups that conduct terrorism against Israel.

The Arab-Israeli peace process is a longstanding major U.S. foreign policy interest, and the Administration and Congress are concerned about any terrorist groups or state sponsors that oppose the process. Possibly because of a breakdown in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process in September 2000, Palestinian organizations such as Hamas, as well as older groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine that have been inactive for years, have stepped up operations against Israelis. Following several major terrorist attacks against Israelis since December 2001, the United States has strongly criticized Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat for failing to exert sufficient efforts to constrain these and other groups. Some analysts assert that Israel's actions against the Palestinians have contributed to increased Palestinian support for violence against Israel.

U.S. differences with other governments on the strategies for countering terrorism in the Near East have to some extent narrowed since September 11. The United States, in the past, differed with its allies, particularly on how to deal with state sponsors of terrorism; most allied governments believe that engaging these countries diplomatically might sometimes be more effective than trying to isolate or punish them. The United States has generally been more inclined than its European allies to employ sanctions and military action to compel state sponsors and groups to abandon terrorism. Post-September 11 developments seem to have validated the importance of both diplomacy and, in certain circumstances, more forceful responses in dealing with terrorism. Differences with allies have begun to reemerge as the Bush Administration expands its "war on terrorism," indicating it will seek to prevent the emergence of threats by regimes — some of which also have ties to terrorist groups — that are developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

This report will be updated annually.

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# Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2002

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This report updates the version issued on September 10, 2001, just prior to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that killed about 3,000 persons. It is an analysis of Near Eastern terrorist groups and countries on the U.S. “terrorism list,” a list of countries that the Secretary of Commerce and Secretary of State have determined provide repeated support for international terrorism.<sup>2</sup> This report adopts the same definition of terrorism as that used by the State Department in its annual reports: the definition contained in Title 22 U.S.C. Section 2656f(d). According to this section, “terrorism” means “premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”

Five out of the seven states currently on the terrorism list are located in the Near East region — Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Sudan. (The other two are Cuba and North Korea, which will not be covered in this report). The composition of the list has not changed since Sudan was added in 1993. The groups analyzed in this report include, but are not limited to, those designated as “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” (FTOs), pursuant to the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-132). The last section of the report discusses significant themes in U.S. unilateral and multilateral efforts to combat terrorism in or from the region. The State Department’s annual report on international terrorism, entitled *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 2000*<sup>3</sup> is a significant source for this report; other sources include press reports and conversations with U.S. counter-terrorism officials, experts, investigative journalists, and foreign diplomats.

Although the September 11 attacks have placed Near Eastern terrorist groups at the center of U.S. anti-terrorism policy, Near Eastern terrorist groups and their state sponsors have been a focus of U.S. counter-terrorism policies for several decades. Since the 1970s, many of the most high-profile acts of terrorism against American citizens and targets have been conducted by these groups, sometimes with the encouragement or at the instigation of their state sponsors. However, no single terrorist attack — either in or outside the Near East region — compares in scale to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, which killed a

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<sup>1</sup> This report was prepared with the assistance of Patricia Niehoff.

<sup>2</sup> The determinations are made in accordance with Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 50 U.S.C. 2405(j).

<sup>3</sup> State Department Publication 10822, released April 2001.

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total of over 3,000 persons. Senior U.S. officials have attributed this attack to the Al Qaeda network, whose leaders enjoyed sanctuary in Afghanistan from 1996 until their defeat at the hands of the U.S. military and its Afghan partners in late 2001.

According to *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 2000* (available on the U.S. Department of State's web site at [<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/>]; hereafter cited as **Patterns 2000**), worldwide terrorism-related casualties increased to 405 in 2000 from 233 in 1999, but the number of attacks increased only slightly, from 392 in 1999 to 423 in 2000. Of these 2000 totals, only 16 of the 423 attacks and 19 of the 405 casualties occurred in the Middle East, although *Patterns 2000* covered only three months of the Palestinian uprising that began in late September 2000. Since 2001 began, there have been dozens of terrorism-related Israeli casualties resulting from Palestinian suicide bomb attacks, some of them in retaliation for Israeli actions against suspected Palestinian militants. Thirty-one of attacks and 12 of the deaths during 2000 occurred in Eurasia (Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia).

The terrorist groups analyzed often differ in their motivations, objectives, ideologies, and levels of activity. The Islamist groups remain generally the most active, stating as their main objective the overthrow of secular, pro-Western governments, the derailment of the Arab-Israeli peace process, the expulsion of U.S. forces from the region, or the end of what they consider unjust occupation of Muslim lands. Some groups, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), fight for cultural and political rights or the formation of separate ethnically-based states. **Table 1** below shows the 20 Near Eastern groups currently designated by the State Department as FTOs. The designations were mostly made when the FTO list was inaugurated in October 1997 and revised in October 1999 and October 2001. A group can be added to the list at any time; Al Qaeda (the bin Laden network) was added on August 21, 1998, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was designated on September 25, 2000, and two Pakistani groups — Lashkar e-Tayyiba and Jaish e-Mohammad — were added to the FTO list on December 26, 2001.

Under the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, the designation of a group as an FTO blocks its assets in the United States and makes it a criminal offense for U.S. persons to provide it with material support or resources, such as financial contributions. Executive Order 12947 of January 23, 1995, also bars U.S. dealings (contributions to or financial transactions) with any individuals named as "Specially Designated Terrorists (SDTs)." On November 2, 2001, the Secretary of State also subjected all FTOs to the increased financial restrictions that had been applied to Al Qaeda-related entities under Executive Order 13224 (September 23, 2001). Under this new executive order, the United States can close down U.S. branches of foreign banks that do not comply with U.S. requests to end dealings with the FTOs. An SDT, according to the executive order, is a person found to pose a significant risk of disrupting the Middle East peace process, or to have materially supported acts of violence toward that end.

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**Table 1. Near Eastern Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Terrorist Activity Level</b>
Abu Nidal Organization	Palestinian, nationalist	Low
Abu Sayyaf Group	Filipino, Islamist	Moderate
Armed Islamic Group	Algerian, Islamist	Moderate
Hamas	Palestinian, Islamist	Very High
Harakat ul-Mujahidin/Lashkar e-Tayyiba/Jaish e-Mohammad	Kashmir, Islamist	Very High
Hizballah	Lebanese, Shiite Islamist	High
Islamic Group	Egyptian, Islamist	Moderate
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	Uzbek, Islamist	Moderate
Al-Jihad	Egyptian, Islamist	Moderate
Kach and Kahane Chai	Jewish extremist	Low
Kurdistan Workers' Party	Kurdish, anti-Turkey	Low
Palestinian Islamic Jihad	Palestinian, Islamist	Very High
Palestine Liberation Front	Palestinian, nationalist	Low
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	Palestinian, Marxist	Low
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command	Palestinian, nationalist	Moderate
People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran	Iranian, left-wing anti-regime	Very Low
Al Qaeda (Bin Laden Network)	Multinational Islamist, Afghanistan-based	Extremely High
Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front	Turkish, left-wing anti-government	Low

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In contrast to Patterns 2000, this report analyzes the following:

- The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which has not been the subject of a separate section in Patterns since Patterns 1995, is analyzed in this report because of the debate over whether PLO leader Yasir Arafat is taking sufficient steps to prevent terrorism by other groups in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Since late 2000, there has been discussion about the degree to which certain PLO factions are involved in violence against Israel and whether they should be named as FTOs.
- When the FTO list was reviewed and re-issued in October 1999, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) was dropped, largely because it has reconciled with Arafat. The group's past involvement in terrorism, and the recent revival of its operations against Israel, are discussed in this report.
- This report contains a section on the Abu Sayyaf Group operating in the Philippines, as well as analysis of several Pakistani Islamist groups that are fighting Indian control of part of Kashmir Province. These groups are discussed in this report, even though they operate outside the Near East region, because of their alleged connections to the bin Laden network and the Taliban of Afghanistan.
- In accordance with the October 2001 redesignation of the FTO list, the two Jewish extremist groups Kach and Kahane Chai will be treated as one group.

## Radical Islamic Groups

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, and particularly since the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in November of that year, radical Islam has attracted widespread press attention as the driving ideology of the most active Middle Eastern terrorist groups and state sponsors. Of the 20 FTOs listed above, 12 are Islamic organizations.

### Hizballah (Party of God)<sup>4</sup>

Lebanon-based Hizballah appears to be groping for direction following Israel's May 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon. Having accomplished its main goal of ousting Israel from southern Lebanon, some in the organization want it to focus exclusively on political and social work, primarily through participation in parliament (it holds 8 out of 128 total seats) and through its charity and reconstruction works with Lebanon's Shiite community. Some want Hizballah to accept ministerial positions

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<sup>4</sup> For other names under which Hizballah or the other groups discussed in this paper operate, see U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. "Terrorism: What You Need to Know About U.S. Sanctions."



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in Lebanon's cabinet, a step that Hizballah has thus far not taken. Hardliners in Hizballah want it to battle Israeli forces over the border, particularly in the disputed Shib'a farms area.<sup>5</sup> Other hardliners in the organization believe that the Israeli withdrawal validated its guerrilla strategy and appear to be helping Palestinian groups apply similar tactics against Israeli forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Although initially encouraged by Hizballah's relative restraint following the Israeli withdrawal, Israel and the United States remain wary of Hizballah. Hizballah's 15 year military campaign against Israeli and Israeli surrogate forces in southern Lebanon — activity that is not technically considered terrorism by the U.S. State Department — often included rocket attacks on Israeli civilians. Even though the United Nations has certified that Israel's withdrawal is complete, Hizballah has asserted that Israel still occupies some Lebanese territory (the Shib'a farms) and, on that basis, has conducted several military attacks on Israel since the withdrawal. In October 2000, Hizballah captured three Israeli soldiers in the Shib'a farms area and kidnaped an Israeli noncombatant whom it had lured to Lebanon. Israel announced in early November 2001 that the three soldiers are believed dead.

Hizballah has continued to conduct surveillance of the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon and its personnel, according to recent Patterns reports, but no major terrorist attacks have been attributed to it since 1994. However, according to numerous press reports and Hizballah leaders' own statements, the organization is providing advice and logistical support to Islamist Palestinian groups fighting against Israel in the latest Palestinian uprising, which began in September 2000. In January 2001, Israel accused Hizballah of serving as an intermediary in the shipment of 50 tons of weaponry from Iran that was seized by Israel and, according to the United States and Israel, was bound for the Palestinian Authority. The PA is precluded from fielding the weapons contained in the shipment under its Oslo interim accords with Israel. If true, this suggests that Hizballah is trying to broaden its assistance to non-Islamist Palestinian elements. In late August 2001, Jordanian officials discovered a cache of rockets at a Hizballah-owned location in Jordan, igniting fears that Hizballah might fire rockets on Israel from there or might provide the weapons to Palestinian militants there or in the West Bank.<sup>6</sup> Jordan's King Abdullah was said to have raised his concern about growing Hizballah activity in Jordan with President Bush in February 2002.

**Hizballah's History.** Founded in 1982 by Lebanese Shiite clerics inspired by the Islamic revolutionary ideology of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, Hizballah's original goal was to establish an Islamic republic in Lebanon. During the 1980s, Hizballah was a principal sponsor of anti-Western, and particularly anti-U.S., terrorism. It is known or suspected to have been involved in suicide truck bombings of the U.S. Embassy (April 1983), the U.S. Marine barracks (October 1983, killing 220 Marine, 18 Navy and 3 Army personnel), and the U.S. Embassy annex (September 1984), all in Beirut. It also hijacked TWA Flight 847 in 1985, killing a Navy diver, Robert Stethem, who was on board, and its factions were responsible for the detention of

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<sup>5</sup> For a further discussion of this dispute, see CRS Report RL31078, *The Shib'a Farms Dispute and Its Implications*. August 7, 2001, by Alfred Prados.

<sup>6</sup> Slavin, Barbara. Rockets Found in Jordan Worry U.S. *USA Today*, August 31, 2001.

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most, if not all, U.S. and Western hostages held in Lebanon during the 1980s and early 1990s. Eighteen Americans were held hostage in Lebanon during that period, three of whom were killed.

In the early 1990s, Hizballah also demonstrated an ability to conduct terrorism far from the Middle East. In May 1999, Argentina's Supreme Court, after an official investigation, formally blamed Hizballah for the March 17, 1992 bombing of Israel's embassy in Buenos Aires and issued an arrest warrant for Hizballah terrorist leader Imad Mughniyah. Hizballah did not claim responsibility for the attack outright, but it released a surveillance tape of the embassy, implying responsibility. In May 1998, FBI Director Louis Freeh told Argentina the FBI believes that Hizballah, working with Iranian diplomats, was also responsible for the July 18, 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires that left 86 dead.<sup>7</sup> In July 1999, Argentine investigators brought charges against 20 suspected Argentine collaborators in the AMIA bombings, and the trial began in late September 2001.

**Hizballah's Outside Connections.** Hizballah maintains connections with similar groups in the Persian Gulf. Saudi and Bahraini investigations of anti-regime unrest have revealed the existence of local chapters of Hizballah composed of Shiite Muslims, many of whom have studied in Iran's theological seminaries and received terrorist training there and in Lebanon. Saudi and U.S. officials believe that Saudi Shiite Muslims, possibly with connections to Lebanese Hizballah, were responsible for the June 25, 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex for U.S. military personnel, near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The United States reaffirmed this allegation in the June 2001 U.S. indictments of 14 Khobar suspects. According to Patterns 1998, in November 1998 Bahraini authorities uncovered an alleged bomb plot that they blamed on persons linked to Bahraini and Lebanese Hizballah.

Patterns 1999 reiterates that Hizballah receives "substantial" amounts of financial assistance, weapons, and political and organizational support from both Syria and Iran, although it does not mention specific figures. Then Secretary of State Christopher said on May 21, 1996 that Iran gave Hizballah about \$100 million per year, a figure that U.S. officials have not since deviated from. A reported 150 of Iran's Revolutionary Guards remain in Lebanon to coordinate Iran's aid to Hizballah. Syria permits Iran to supply weapons to Hizballah through the international airport in Damascus, although a recent Turkish shutdown of the air corridor connecting Iran and Syria has made Iranian deliveries more difficult.

**Specially Designated Terrorists (SDTs).**<sup>8</sup> Hizballah members named as SDTs include: (1) Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah, who is about 44 and has led Hizballah since 1993; (2) Shaykh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, the 64-year-old senior Shiite cleric and leading spiritual figure of Hizballah; (3) Subhi Tufayli, the 54 year old former Hizballah Secretary General who leads a radical breakaway faction of Hizballah; and (4) Imad Mughniyah, the 39 year old Hizballah intelligence

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<sup>7</sup> FBI Ties Iran to Argentine Bombing in '94. *Washington Post*, August 8, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> The list of SDTs is contained in the Office of Foreign Assets Control factsheet "Terrorism: What You Need to Know About U.S. Sanctions."

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officer and alleged holder of some Western hostages in the 1980s. He was also implicated in the TWA 847 hijacking. Mughniyah, as well as several alleged perpetrators of the June 1996 attack on the U.S. housing complex of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, was included on a list of 39 entities and persons issued October 12, 2001 under Executive Order 13224 (September 23, 2001). The order subjects listed entities to financial restrictions.

**Blocked Assets.** According to the Treasury Department's "Terrorist Assets Report" for 2000, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has seized \$283,000 in assets belonging to 18 persons arrested in North Carolina in July 2000 on suspicion of smuggling goods to generate funds for Hizballah.

## **Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**

Prior to the September 2000 outbreak of the Palestinian uprising, it appeared that the bulk of the leadership of the Sunni Muslim Palestinian group Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) was accommodating Yasir Arafat's leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas leaders also appeared resigned to an eventual final peace agreement between Israel and the PA, although they continued to criticize Arafat as too eager to compromise with Israel. Since the uprising began, Hamas and its smaller ally, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), have escalated terrorist attacks against Israelis. Hamas claimed responsibility for the June 1, 2001 suicide bombing of the "Dolphinarium" discotheque in Tel Aviv, which killed 21, and for an August 9, 2001 suicide bombing at a pizza restaurant in Jerusalem that killed 18, including one American. It also claimed responsibility for the December 1 - 2, 2001 suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa that killed about 25 persons, in addition to the three bombers. PIJ has conducted several recent suicide bombings, many of which killed only the bomber(s). Many experts believe that the renewed terrorist activity is at least partly attributable to a breakdown in security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority — cooperation that was widely credited with keeping terrorist attacks to a minimum in the preceding few years. The renewed terrorist threat has led Israel to adopt a policy, criticized by the United States and many other countries, of assassinating Hamas and PIJ activists to preempt their suspected attacks.

Hamas continues to receive funding from businesses it runs in Palestinian controlled areas, from Iran (about 10% of its budget), from wealthy private benefactors in the Persian Gulf monarchies, and Palestinian expatriates, according to Patterns 2000. The Patterns report adds that the group conducts fundraising and propaganda activities in Western Europe and North America. Many individual donors appear to believe their contributions go to charitable activities for poor Palestinians served by Hamas' social services network, and are not being used for terrorism. PIJ is politically closer to Iran than is Hamas, and apparently derives most of its funding from state sponsors, especially Iran. PIJ receives some logistical support from Syria, according to Patterns 2000.

**History.** Hamas was formed by Muslim Brotherhood activists during the early stages of the earlier Palestinian uprising (intifada) in 1987. Its spiritual leader, Shaykh Ahmad Yassin, who is paralyzed, was released from prison by Israel in October 1997. He seems to serve as a bridge between Hamas' two main components

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— the extremists who orchestrate terrorist attacks (primarily through a clandestine wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades), and the more moderate elements affiliated with Hamas' social services, charity, and educational institutions. PIJ was, in part, inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979 even though PIJ is a Sunni Muslim, not a Shiite Muslim organization. PIJ remains almost purely a guerrilla organization, with no overt component. It is led by Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, a Gaza-born, 43 year old academic who previously was an adjunct professor at the University of South Florida. He was chosen leader in 1995 after his predecessor, Fathi al-Shiqaqi was assassinated, allegedly by Israeli agents. Recent Patterns reports characterize Hamas' strength as "an unknown number of hardcore members [and] tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers," and PIJ's strength as "unknown."

Hamas and PIJ generally have not targeted the United States or Americans directly, although Americans have died in attacks by these groups, along with Israelis and often the bombers themselves. Five out of the 65 killed in a series of four Hamas/PIJ bombings in Israel during February - March 1996 were American citizens. These bombings had the apparent effect of shifting public opinion toward the conservative Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu in Israeli national elections on May 29, 1996, possibly proving decisive in his election victory as Prime Minister over then Labor Party leader Shimon Peres. Neither group conducted major attacks in the run-up to the May 1999 Israeli elections, although they did carry out attacks in an attempt to derail the negotiation and implementation of the October 23, 1998 Israeli-Palestinian Wye River Memorandum. In total, the two groups have conducted about 80 suicide bombings or attempted suicide bombings, killing more than 450 Israelis, since the signing of the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles in 1993.<sup>9</sup>

**Blocked Assets.** The United States has blocked the assets of some alleged Hamas/PIJ leaders, using the authority of President Clinton's January 23, 1995 executive order on Middle East terrorism. As of the end of 2000, a total of about \$17,000 in PIJ assets in the United States were blocked, consisting of a bank account belonging to PIJ leader Shallah.<sup>10</sup> On December 4, 2001, three financial entities believed linked to Hamas were designated for increased financial restrictions under Executive Order 13224. The three are the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, Beit al-Mal Holdings, and Al Aqsa Islamic Bank.

**SDTs.** Several Hamas and PIJ activists have been named as SDTs. They include (1) Hamas founder Shaykh Ahmad Yassin; (2) PIJ leader Ramadan Abdullah Shallah; (3) PIJ ideologist Abd al-Aziz Awda; (4) Hamas political leader Musa Abu Marzuq; and (5) alleged U.S. fundraiser for Hamas, Mohammad Salah.

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<sup>9</sup> Pipes, Daniel and Steven Emerson. Rolling Back the Forces of Terror. *Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> These figures are contained in the 2000 Annual Report to Congress on Assets in the United States Belonging to Terrorist Countries or International Terrorist Organizations. Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of Treasury. January 2001.

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## The Islamic Group and Al-Jihad

Egyptian security authorities continue to gain the upper hand in their battle against the opposition Islamic Group and its ally, Al-Jihad,<sup>11</sup> groups that, over the past several decades, periodically have gone underground and then resurfaced. This effort could be enhanced by the U.S. defeat of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, because militants from the two groups constitute a large and politically significant faction of Al Qaeda. There have been no large scale terrorist attacks by these groups since the Islamic Group's November 17, 1997 attack on tourists near Luxor, and no attacks inside Egypt at all since August 1998. The gunmen in the Luxor attack killed 58 tourists and wounded 26 others, and then committed suicide or were killed by Egyptian security forces. Even before September 11, these Egyptian groups sensed that they were on the defensive and that terrorism had made them unpopular. In late 1997 leaders of both groups, including their common spiritual leader, the 64 year old blind cleric Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, declared a ceasefire with the Egyptian government. Muhammad Hamza, who is in operational control of the Islamic Group in Egypt while Abd al-Rahman remains incarcerated in the United States, has abided by the truce.

**Connections to Al Qaeda and the 1993 Bombing of the World Trade Center.** With the decline of the groups' activities within Egypt and the incarceration of Abd al-Rahman for plots related to the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, factions of the groups that are in exile have gravitated to the Al Qaeda network. Several SDTs from the Islamic Group and Al-Jihad became members of bin Laden's inner circle as his top lieutenants, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Abu Hafs Masri (Mohammad Atef). According to U.S. military officials, Atef was killed by a U.S. air strike during the U.S. war on the Taliban and Al Qaeda. These Egyptian militants oppose any truce with the Egyptian government and also seek, in concert with bin Laden, to attack U.S. interests directly.

Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman was not convicted specifically for the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, but he was convicted for related unsuccessful plots in the New York area. Those convicted in the Trade Center bombing were allegedly associated with him. There has been much speculation about the relationship, if any, between Abd al-Rahman and bin Laden at the time of the 1993 Trade Center bombing. Both recruited fighters for the Afghan conflict against the Soviet Union through organizations in the United States and elsewhere, particularly one called the Maktab al-Khidamat (Services Office), also known as Al Kifah.<sup>12</sup> The two also had close connections to the Islamic government of Sudan, although Abd al-Rahman left Sudan in 1990, before bin Laden relocated there in 1991. Abd al-Rahman's two sons reportedly have been associated with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan since 1989; one was reported killed and one reported captured during the U.S.-led war on Al Qaeda. The alleged mastermind of the 1993 Trade

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<sup>11</sup> A faction of the Jihad operates under the name "Vanguards of Conquest."

<sup>12</sup> Maktab al-Khidamat/Al Kifah were designated for increased financial restrictions under Executive Order 13224, September 23, 2001.



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Center bombing, Ramzi Ahmad Yousef, reportedly was an Al Qaeda member.<sup>13</sup> (See section on Al Qaeda, below). Although their recruiting activity in Afghanistan has raised questions as to whether the United States gave bin Laden or Abd al-Rahman assistance during the Afghan war, the Central Intelligence Agency has told CRS that it found no evidence that the Agency provided any direct assistance to either of them. The U.S. assistance program for the anti-Soviet groups in Afghanistan focused primarily on indigenous Afghan mujahedin and not Arab volunteers such as those sponsored by bin Laden or Abd al-Rahman.

**History.** The Islamic Group and Al-Jihad formed in the early 1970s as offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, which opted to work within the political system after being crushed by former President Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Both seek to replace Egypt's pro-Western, secular government with an Islamic state. Al-Jihad was responsible for the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in October 1981. The Islamic Group has been responsible for several attacks on high-ranking Egyptian officials, including the killing of the People's Assembly Speaker in October 1990 and the wounding of the Minister of Information in April 1993. The Islamic Group also has a nonviolent arm which recruits and builds support openly in poor neighborhoods in Cairo, Alexandria and throughout southern Egypt, and runs social service programs. Al-Jihad has operated only clandestinely, focusing almost exclusively on assassinations.

**SDTs.** The following Egyptian Islamist figures have been named as SDTs or as subject to enhanced financial restrictions under Executive Order 13224: (1) Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, who was acquitted in 1984 of inciting Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's assassination, is in a medical detention facility in Missouri following his October 1995 conviction for planning terrorist conspiracies in the New York area; (2) Ayman al-Zawahiri, about 51, who is a top lieutenant of bin Laden (see below) and was convicted in Egypt for the Sadat assassination;<sup>14</sup> (3) Mohammad Atef, who, as noted above, was apparently killed in the U.S.-led war on Al Qaeda; (4) Rifa'i Taha Musa, about 48, who was arrested in Syria and extradited to Egypt in October 2001; (5) Abbud al-Zumar, leader of the remnants of the original Jihad who is serving a 40 year sentence in Egypt; (6) Talat Qasim, about 44, a propaganda leader of the Islamic Group; and (7) Muhammad Shawqi Islambouli, about 46, the brother of the lead gunman in the Sadat assassination. Islambouli, a military leader of the Islamic Group, also is believed to be associated with bin Laden in Afghanistan.

## Al Qaeda (Osama bin Laden Network)

Founded in 1988, Al Qaeda (Arabic for "the base"), the network of Osama bin Laden, has evolved from a regional threat to U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf to a global threat to U.S. citizens and national security interests. The September 11, 2001 suicide hijacking attacks, allegedly by Al Qaeda, on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were considered a threat to U.S. national security and led to a U.S. military campaign against Al Qaeda in its primary sanctuary in Afghanistan, and against Al

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Sees Links in Brooklyn To World Terrorist Network. *New York Times*, October 22, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Egypt's Most Wanted. *The Estimate*, December 19, 1997. P.8.

## CRS-11

Qaeda's protector, the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime. By December 2001, the war had resulted in the ouster of the Taliban from power and the death or capture of thousands of Al Qaeda fighters and operatives in Afghanistan. Bin Laden's fate, and that of his top cohort, Egyptian Islamic Jihad leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, are unknown. Pakistan's leader, President Pervez Musharraf, has said he believes bin Laden most likely has died, but others, particularly U.S. officials, say there is no evidence bin Laden or al-Zawahiri have died.

Most experts believe that, whether bin Laden does or does not survive the war, the effort has seriously disrupted Al Qaeda's ability to plan major new acts of terrorism. At least one of bin Laden's top lieutenants, Mohammad Atef, was reportedly killed in the war. Another senior recruiter, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, is in U.S. custody. Zawahiri's family has been killed in the war, according to a death announcement in an Egyptian newspaper. Others say that much of the Al Qaeda network is based outside Afghanistan and its members still pose a substantial threat to U.S. and other targets in the United States and abroad. The fate of other top operatives, including Abu Zubaydah and Saif al-Adl (Mohammad Makawi), is unknown, and some believe that they or any number of other senior Al Qaeda operatives are capable of reconstituting the group even if bin Laden and Zawahiri have not survived.

Those who believe Al Qaeda can last beyond its defeat in Afghanistan note that, in building this network, bin Laden assembled a broad coalition of disparate radical Islamic groups of varying nationalities to work toward common goals — the expulsion of non-Muslim control or influence from Muslim-inhabited lands. The network's ideology, laid out in several pronouncements by bin Laden and his allies, has led Al Qaeda to sponsor Islamic fighters or terrorists against Serb forces in Bosnia; against Soviet forces in Afghanistan and now Russian forces in Chechnya; against Indian control over part of Kashmir; against secular or pro-Western governments in Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Uzbekistan; and against U.S. troops and citizens in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Yemen, Jordan, and the U.S. mainland itself. Some experts believe this ideology is widely held and can outlive bin Laden or Al Qaeda's formal existence as an organization.

The backbone of Al Qaeda, according to many experts, is the ideological and personal bond among the Arab volunteers who were recruited by bin Laden for the fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989). Reflecting its initial low level of early activity, Al Qaeda was not discussed in U.S. government reports until *Patterns* 1993. That report, which did not mention a formal group name, said that several thousand non-Afghan Muslims fought in the war against the Soviets and the Afghan Communist government during 1979 to 1992,<sup>15</sup> and that many of these fighters had subsequently become engaged in Islamic opposition activity and terrorism.

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**Al Qaeda's Global Reach.** U.S. officials say that Al Qaeda may have a presence in up to 60 countries or locations worldwide. The presence varies widely in scope: from Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda's leadership was welcomed by the

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<sup>15</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1993*. Released April 1994. p.4.

## CRS-12

Taliban, to Western and Latin American countries in which Al Qaeda operatives are unwelcome but might be active unbeknownst to the government of that country. In some cases, such as Sudan and Yemen, governments are aware of an Al Qaeda presence but might be unwilling or ill-equipped to take action to expel Al Qaeda. In other cases, Al Qaeda activists are linked to opposition movements, such as those in the Persian Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates).

In other cases, the Al Qaeda presence is a function of the activities of its subordinate or affiliate groups, including: Egypt's Islamic Group and Al-Jihad; Algeria's Armed Islamic Group and Salafist Group for Call and Combat, which have been active not only in Algeria but in past acts of terrorism against former colonial power France; the Abu Sayyaf Organization in the Philippines; Harakat ul-Mujahidin (Movement of Islamic Fighters) in Pakistan; the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; the Islamic Army of Aden (Yemen); the Asbat al-Ansar (Partisan's Group) in Lebanon; Al Ittihad Islamiya (Islamic Union) in Somalia; and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, an opposition movement to Libya's government.<sup>16</sup> Although there are few evident links to Hamas, bin Laden was a follower of Dr. Abdullah al-Azzam, a Palestinian of Jordanian origin who was influential in the founding of both Hamas and Al Qaeda and who was assassinated in 1989. In addition to Afghanistan, Al Qaeda or its affiliates has participated in recent or ongoing wars or insurgencies, such as in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, and Kashmir. Some Uighur activists in Muslim areas of western China are said to be affiliated with Al Qaeda.<sup>17</sup>

In still other cases, Al Qaeda's affiliate groups are active in countries near their main areas of operation. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has transited Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in an effort to operate against the government of Uzbekistan. Chechen guerrillas allegedly linked to Al Qaeda have reportedly transited Azerbaijan, and there may be ties between Al Qaeda and an Azeri Islamist opposition group called Hizb e-Tahrir (Liberation Party). In east Asia, Abu Sayyaf and other Islamic activists are said to be operating in Indonesia, and Malaysia, and an alleged Al Qaeda plot against the U.S. embassy in Singapore was reportedly uncovered in January 2002. The Singapore plotters are alleged to be members of an organization called Jemaah Islamiah (Islamic Group), which was created in Malaysia in the mid 1990s and also has a presence in Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>18</sup> Regarding Indonesia, there is speculation that a group called Laskar Jihad, founded in early 2000 and which advocates anti-Christian violence, is associated with Al Qaeda.<sup>19</sup> Al Qaeda has also been present in some countries in the course of planning or committing acts of terrorism, such as several countries in east Africa, including

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<sup>16</sup> With the exception of the Islamic Group in Egypt, all the organizations mentioned above were listed by Executive Order 13224 as subject to U.S. and international financial restrictions.

<sup>17</sup> Pan, Philip. China Links Bin Laden to Separatists. *Washington Post*, January 22, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Reach. *Washington Post*, February 3, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Bonner, Raymond and Jane Perlez. Al Qaeda Seeks Niche in Indonesia, Officials Fear. *New York Times*, January 23, 2002.



## CRS-13

Kenya, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Uganda.<sup>20</sup> A major Al Qaeda terrorist plot was foiled in Jordan in December 1999 (see below), suggesting that there has been Al Qaeda activity there; a segment of that plot, which also was foiled, was attempted by an Al Qaeda cell in Canada.

The September 11 attacks demonstrated that Al Qaeda cells can exist even in countries, such as the United States, where Al Qaeda is clearly considered hostile by the government and the population. These countries are working together to uncover and arrest Al Qaeda cells that might remain. Previous investigations of Al Qaeda plots, as well as of the September 11 attacks, have turned up Al Qaeda cells in virtually every country in western Europe, as well as a few countries in eastern Europe, including Poland. Some alleged Al Qaeda activists are reported to have transited a few countries in South America, and those countries are working with U.S. intelligence and law enforcement authorities against Al Qaeda.<sup>21</sup>

**History of Terrorist Activities.** Bin Laden's network has been connected to a number of acts of terrorism prior to the September 11 attacks. Bin Laden himself has been indicted by a U.S. court for involvement in several of them.

- Bin Laden has claimed responsibility for the December 1992 attempted bombings against 100 U.S. servicemen in Yemen—there to support U.N. relief operations in Somalia (Operation Restore Hope). No one was killed.
- In press interviews, bin Laden has openly boasted that he provided weapons to anti-U.S. militias in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope and that his loyalists fought against U.S. forces there. In a street battle in Mogadishu in October 1993, 18 U.S. special operations forces were killed in a battle with militiamen allegedly supplied and assisted by Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's involvement with the Somali militias appears to have strengthened bin Laden's view that terrorism and low-technology combat could succeed in causing the United States to withdraw from military involvement abroad.
- The four Saudi nationals who confessed to the November 13, 1995 bombing of a U.S. military training facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, admitted on Saudi television to being inspired by bin Laden and other Islamic radicals. Three of the four who confessed to the bombing were veterans of conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya.
- According to Patterns 1997, members of bin Laden's organization might have aided the Islamic Group assassination attempt against Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia in June 1995.

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<sup>20</sup> For further information on Al Qaeda activities in Africa, see CRS Report RL31247, *Africa and the War on Terrorism*, by Ted Dagne.

<sup>21</sup> For further information, see CRS Report RS21049, *Latin America: Terrorism Issues and Implications for the United States*, by Mark Sullivan.

## CRS-14

- There is no direct evidence that bin Laden was involved in the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. However, Patterns 1999 says that bin Laden's network was responsible for plots in Asia believed orchestrated by Ramzi Ahmad Yusuf, who was captured in Pakistan, brought to the United States, and convicted in November 1997 of masterminding the Trade Center bombing. The plots in Asia, all of which failed, were: to assassinate the Pope during his late 1994 visit to the Philippines and President Clinton during his visit there in early 1995; to bomb the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Manila in late 1994; and to bomb U.S. trans-Pacific flights.
- The August 7, 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed 224 persons, including 12 American citizens, occurred just after a six month period in which bin Laden had issued repeated and open threats, including a February 1998 pronouncement calling for the killing of U.S. civilians and servicemen worldwide. On August 20, 1998, the United States launched cruise missiles on bin Laden's training camps in eastern Afghanistan, based on U.S. evidence of his network's involvement in the bombings. The United States also struck a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan that the Administration alleged was linked to bin Laden and was producing chemical weapons agents. U.S. officials add that the bombings were intended to disrupt planning for a new attack. For their alleged role in the bombings, 17 alleged members of Al Qaeda have been indicted by a U.S. court, including bin Laden. Four of the six in U.S. custody have been tried and convicted; three others were arrested and have been convicted in Britain.
- In December 1999, U.S. and Jordanian law enforcement authorities uncovered and thwarted two alleged plots — one in the United States and one in Jordan — to attack U.S. citizens celebrating the new millennium. The United States plot, allegedly to bomb Los Angeles international airport, was orchestrated by a pro-bin Laden cell of Algerian Armed Islamic Group members coming from Canada. In June 2000, Jordan tried 28 persons who allegedly were planning to attack tourists during millennium festivities in that country, but 15 of those charged are still at large. Also in June 2000, Lebanon placed 29 alleged followers of bin Laden, who belong to an organization called Asbat al-Ansar (see above), on trial for planning terrorist attacks in Jordan. The presence of bin Laden cells in Jordan and Lebanon, coupled with Israeli arrests of alleged bin Laden operatives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, suggests that Al Qaeda might plan acts of terrorism in connection with the Palestinian uprising. Some press reports in February 2002 indicate that some Al Qaeda activists who fled Afghanistan after the start of the U.S. war effort have gone to Lebanon. If the reports are true, the fleeing Al Qaeda members might be benefitting from the Asbat al-Ansar network there.

## CRS-15

- Patterns 2000 says that “supporters” of bin Laden are suspected in the October 12, 2000 bombing of the destroyer U.S.S. Cole in the harbor of the port of Aden, Yemen. The blast, which severely damaged the ship, killed 17 and injured 39 Navy personnel.
- Although most governments have agreed with the United States that the evidence of Al Qaeda’s responsibility for September 11 is clear and compelling, there is little agreement on responsibility for the spate of anthrax mailings in the United States that followed the September 11 events. Five people died in these mailings, which temporarily closed several congressional buildings and post offices. No one has been arrested for the mailings. U.S. officials say it appears, based on tests, that the source of the anthrax was domestic, such as a military research laboratory, but a connection to Al Qaeda has not been ruled out.

**SDTs/Executive Orders.** President Clinton’s August 20, 1998 Executive Order 13099 amended an earlier January 23, 1995 Executive Order (12947) by naming Al Qaeda as an FTO. The effect of the order was to ban U.S. financial transactions with bin Laden’s organization and to allow U.S. law enforcement to freeze any bin Laden assets in the United States that could be identified. The order also named bin Laden as an SDT, along with Rifai Taha Musa, of the Egyptian Islamic Group (see that section above) and Mohammad Atef. Atef and Zawahiri (see above) were indicted along with bin Laden on November 4, 1998, for the Kenya/Tanzania bombings.<sup>22</sup>

**Al Qaeda Financing.** Financially, Al Qaeda drew initially on the personal fortune of bin Laden, variously estimated at anywhere from \$50 million to \$300 million. The organization, according to most press reports, later became relatively self-sustaining, relying on funding from many other sources, including contributions, Islamic charities and lending institutions, such as Al Barakat, and some legitimate businesses, such as a chain of honey shops and bakeries in the Middle East. Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001, greatly expanded the number of Al Qaeda related entities under financial restrictions, and increased the scope of the restrictions to include penalties against foreign financial entities that conduct transactions with the named entities. Many of the entities named are individual leaders of Al Qaeda, including those mentioned in this section.<sup>23</sup> The Deputy Treasury Secretary said on January 22, 2002 that about \$80 million in Al Qaeda assets had been uncovered and seized worldwide since Executive Order 13224 was issued. In addition, about \$221 million in assets of the Taliban movement were blocked under Executive Order 13129, issued in July 1999 on the grounds that the

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<sup>22</sup> Loeb, Vernon. As U.S. Targets Bin Laden, 2 Top Aides Also Draw Scrutiny. *Washington Post*, July 3, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> A complete listing of the entities covered under Executive Order 13224 can be found at the website of the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Dept. of the Treasury. *Terrorism: What You Need to Know About the U.S. Embargo* [<http://www.treas.gov/ofac/>].

## CRS-16

Taliban continued to harbor bin Laden. However, in January 2002 the United States released those funds to the new Afghan interim administration.

**Osama bin Laden**

Osama bin Laden, born July 30, 1957 the seventeenth of twenty sons of a (now deceased) Saudi construction magnate of Yemeni origin, gained prominence during the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. Bin Laden's father died in 1968 when the aircraft he was piloting crashed. Bin Laden studied civil engineering in his family's home city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, before going to Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion of that country in December 1979. In 1989, after the Afghan war ended, he returned to Saudi Arabia to work in his family's business, the Bin Laden Construction group. However, his radical Islamic contacts and protests against the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia to combat Iraq's invasion of Kuwait caused him to run afoul of Saudi authorities.

In 1991, bin Laden relocated to Sudan with the approval of Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF) leader Hasan al-Turabi. There, in concert with NIF leaders, he built a network of businesses, including an Islamic bank (Al Shamal), an import-export firm, and firms that exported agricultural products. An engineer by training, bin Laden also used his family connections in the construction business to help Sudan build roads and airport facilities. The businesses in Sudan, some of which may still be operating, enabled him to offer safe haven and employment in Sudan to Al Qaeda members, promoting their involvement in radical Islamic movements in their countries of origin (especially Egypt) as well as anti-U.S. terrorism. He reportedly has some business interests in Yemen as well and is believed to have investments in European and Asian firms. Bin Laden has said publicly that, while he was in Sudan, there were a few assassination attempts against him.

During his time in Sudan, bin Laden also sponsored a London-based group, the Advisory and Reform Committee, that distributed literature against the Saudi regime. As a result of bin Laden's opposition activities, Saudi Arabia revoked his citizenship in 1994 and his family disavowed him, although his Syrian-born mother and some of his brothers reportedly maintained contact with him. He has no formal role in the operations of the Bin Laden Construction group, which continues to receive contracts from the Saudi government and from other Arab countries. In May 1996, following strong U.S. and Egyptian pressure, Sudan expelled him, and he returned to Afghanistan, under protection of the Taliban movement. Some reports say Sudan offered to extradite him to Saudi Arabia but that Saudi Arabia refused the offer.

On June 7, 1999, bin Laden was placed on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List," and a \$25 million reward is offered for information leading to his capture. He is believed to suffer from kidney ailments and the last known video of him, made in early December 2001, showed him to be weakened and possibly injured or ailing. He has several children, including a few sons photographed in Afghanistan by various Middle Eastern media outlets.